**Journal Article:**

**Halat, Erdogan. (2008). A Good Teaching Technique: Webquests. *The Clearing House: 81 (3),* 109-111.**

This article is written as a guide for teachers and educational administrators who are looking for ways to incorporate technology into education. The main problem that the author, Erdogan Halat, outlines is the fact that 21st century teachers are expected not only to teach their subject area, but also to incorporate modern educational tools and technologies into their lessons. The author proposes the use of WebQuests as one such tool. The article describes how WebQuests can effectively be used in the classroom as an educational tool, and also discusses some of the potential challenges that teachers and administrators should consider prior to creating a WebQuest.

After a brief discussion of the challenge of finding ways to use internet technology in the classroom, the author gives an in-depth description of exactly what a WebQuest is. Halat also explains the five stages that must be included in the WebQuest: An introduction to the project, a description of the task, a description of the process, specific resources for students to use, a rubric to evaluate student work, and a conclusion activity that will extend student thinking beyond the specific task and/or have the student reflect on their work. While these stages are fairly straightforward, Halat explains each one in detail to help teachers fully understand the concept and process of a WebQuest. For further information, Halat recommends the website WebQuest.org, which provides further information and a database of sample WebQuests for teachers to browse to enhance their understanding and see some of the different ways that WebQuests can be used. When I visited this website, I also found that it compares and offers sample WebQuests from a number of different sites, so that teachers can “shop around” for a format that meets their needs and their budget.

Halat lists a number of key strengths that make the WebQuest an appealing educational tool. One of the main benefits is that it increases student motivation and requires all students to be active learners. In addition, it allows for creative, alternative assessment of student work while increasing student interest and motivation in the topic. Halat also mentions that WebQuests bring creativity and higher order thinking to both the teaching and the learning. Designing a WebQuest allows the teacher to become more well-versed in online resources for a given topic, thus improving themselves as an educator, and also gives students an opportunity to build online research and web navigation skills.

Despite the many strengths of this teaching tool, Halat does list a number of weaknesses and challenges that may reduce the effectiveness of the tool. The main weakness that Halat notes is that allowing students to work independently on-line makes it much more difficult for the teacher to monitor student work and makes it much easier for students to become distracted or off-task. Though the WebQuest includes all of the necessary webpages for the student to use, it is likely that students will also try to visit other websites, which may or may not be of educational value or relevant to the project. In addition to this inherent problem with all internet-based educational tools, Halat mentions that the

use of WebQuests in particular requires a large time commitment from the teacher. Prior to implementing a WebQuest, Halat suggests that teachers check into student access to the internet outside of the classroom, since students may need more time to work on the project than will be given in-class. Also, since students are required to use specific webpages in the WebQuest, finding and maintaining reliable links can be a challenge for teachers, since pages that were valid at the time of initial creation may expire, URLs may change, content can change, etc. Halat feels that these challenges are far outweighed by the benefits of using a WebQuest as an educational tool, and urges administrators to provide professional development and resources to support their teachers in implementing WebQuests in order to minimize problems and frustration for the teacher.

As the article explains, WebQuests are relevant and applicable to any content area. For the subject of Spanish, a WebQuest lends itself to teaching students about the cultures of the Spanish-speaking world. The internet provides many student-friendly resources for this topic, and it is also an area of high-interest for students that is often minimized in standard foreign language texts. Depending on the ability level of the students, the WebQuest could also be presented in Spanish with Spanish language webpages and/or could require students to create a product in the target language, thus giving practice with vocabulary and grammar as well. Since the teacher can choose any task and any topic, a teacher can really customize their WebQuest to meet any instructional goal and any student ability level.

The article does not include any illustrations, diagrams, or graphs to support the content, but in this case, none are really necessary. In the article, the author refers teachers to WebQuest.org for futher research on the creation of a WebQuest. A number of more academic references of studies pertaining to the use of WebQuests is also included. The references range in date from 1998 to 2007. Many of the older references relate to the creation of the WebQuest in 1998, which is why these older articles may still be useful in defining the basic process of a WebQuest, though more recent resources, such as WebQuest.org, will be more helpful for teachers who actually seek to implement them.